

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Public Health Service
Indian Health Service

Refer to: DCQ

ALBUQUERQUE AREA INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE CIRCULAR NO. 2003-08

PATIENT CHAPERONES DURING PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS

Sec.

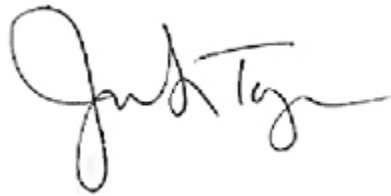
1. Purpose
2. Policy
3. Responsibilities
4. Use of Chaperones
5. Effective Date

1. **PURPOSE.** The purpose of this policy is to establish policy within the Albuquerque Area Indian Health Service (AAIHS) regarding the requirements of a chaperone during patient examinations and procedures whenever a male provider is performing the physical examination on a female or minor children. This safeguard must be seen in the larger goal of respecting the patient's dignity and making an effort to provide a considerate atmosphere. This safeguard enhances the quality of any examination, especially where the examination involves an intimate area of the patient's body.
2. **POLICY.** It shall be the policy of the AAIHS that when patient examining procedures are performed on a female (pelvic or breast examination) or minor children by a male provider the presence of a female chaperone is required for the protection of the patient and staff. Further refinements of this policy are at the discretion of Service Unit leadership.
3. **RESPONSIBILITIES.** It shall be the responsibility of the Chief Executive Office at the Service Unit to ensure that this policy is implemented in order that the female patient will be protected while receiving care from the AAIHS. Each service unit should establish a policy making it clear that chaperones are available and will implement the "Patient Chaperones During Physical Examinations". This policy should be communicated to patients, either by means of a well-displayed notice or preferably through a conversation by the intake nurse or the direct care provider.

4. **USE OF CHAPERONES DURING PHYSICAL EXAMS.**

- a. A chaperone may be a Register Nurse, Licensed Practical Nurse, Nurse Assistant, Health Technician, or similar certified allied health professional. Non-professional staff may be utilized if health professionals are not available. If at all possible, the chaperone will be the same gender as the patient. The chaperone should understand the role and importance of confidentiality.
- b. At the time of the examination or procedure, the primary provider will ask a chaperone to be present in the room.
- c. Patients will be provided with a gown and/or sheet when disrobed.
- d. No patient will be disrobed longer than is required for accomplishing the medical purpose for which the patient was asked to disrobe.

5. **EFFECTIVE DATE.** This circular is effective upon of signature and shall remain in effect until canceled or superceded.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James L. Toya', is positioned above the printed name and title.

11/21/03

James L. Toya M.P.H.
Director, Albuquerque Area Indian Health Service